PalmSource 99: Post-Show Edition

By Rick Broida

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The drool really started flowing when we arrived at InnoGear's booth, where we took a peek at three new Visor modules that promise to become hot properties when they ship early next year. The first, **InfoMitt**, is a one-way pager that includes a personal toll-free pager number, an e-mail address, voice mail, nationwide service, a customized voice greeting and alphanumeric messaging, all for the very tasty price of $49.95. (The paging service itself will run $39.95 per quarter.) That beats PageMart's Synapse card (available only for the Palm III series) by several longshots. Sign us up.

Next, InnoGear showed off **MiniJam**, a combination MP3 audio player and voice recorder. The module features not one, but two, memory sockets for use with SanDisk Multimedia Cards. Thus, you'll be able to outfit it with as much as 128MB of memory,

InnoGear's MiniJam MP3 Player/Recorder

enough to hold several hours of music. The MiniJam has no speaker of its own, but you can plug speakers or headphones into its industry-standard audio-out jack. We heard The Who's "Baba O'Riley" piped through some notebook speakers, and it sounded super.

The module includes CD player-like controls for track selection and volume, so you needn't fire up your Visor to use it (although it does come with some spiffy player software). Finally, the MiniJam takes advantage of the Visor's built-in microphone by offering digital voice recording. The module is a bit larger than the standard Springboard form factor, so it adds a bit of height and depth to the Visor—but not much. Pricing hasn't been set, but should start around $249 (depending on the memory configuration).

Popular as we think the InfoMitt and MiniJam will be, neither quite compares to the amazing **SixPak**. This multifunction module packs a flashing LED for silent alarms; a vibrating alarm; 8MB of Flash RAM; a digital voice recorder; a 56Kbps landline fax/modem; and a connector for GSM cell phones. In a word: Wow. Even more amazing, the cartridge itself is the standard Springboard size, so it doesn't affect the Visor's dimensions one bit. InnoGear tells us the SixPak will sell for "a couple hundred dollars."

A few intriguing Graffiti replacements floated around the PalmSource floor, one of which does away with the stylus altogether. Future Technology Labs' **ThumbType** is a Graffiti overlay that lets you enter data using just your thumbs. Obviously it requires a fairly light touch, and the ham-handed need not apply. However, we were impressed by the demo and look forward to spending more time with the product. At the moment, it's available only in Japan, and U.S. distribution has yet to be finalized. Stay tuned.

Finally, developer association **PDApro** made its debut at PalmSource (Tap Magazine is a founding sponsor). The new organization aims to help developers in the areas of programming, marketing, sales, and especially communication—not only with each other, but with Palm Computing as well.

MiniReview

Five Great E-Books
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Beware of the Dog Roald Dahl, best known for stories like James and the Giant Peach, spins this wartime tale of a wounded flyer shot down over—where? Like an episode of the "Twilight Zone," Beware of the Dog keeps you guessing. Even at the end, even if you can remember your high-school French, you'll find yourself re-reading the story just to see if there's something you missed. A fun, quick read.

Candide Sex, war, famine, pestilence—Voltaire's epic novella has it all. Follow the adventures of naïve young Candide as he's cast out from his beloved kingdom into a harsh, violent, and often hilarious world. It's a riches-to-rags-to-riches story that takes a more impossible twist with each chapter. At 116K, this is a substantial piece of fiction to carry around, but we promise it's worth the space.

The Canterville Ghost "When Mr. Hiram B. Otis, the American Minister, bought Canterville Chase, everyone told him he was doing a very foolish thing, as there was no doubt at all that the place was haunted." So begins Oscar Wilde's satirical, wildly funny tale of the English ghost who meets the American family. Think of it as a 19th-century "Scream."

The Most Dangerous Game Many a Hollywood screenplay has borrowed the plot from Richard Connell's entertaining cat-and-mouse tale. When intrepid hunter Sanger Rainsford falls off a yacht and washes ashore a mysterious island, he's relieved to find sanctuary in the house of General Zaroff. And General Zaroff is elated to have such a celebrated guest. Find out why in this gripping adventure.

The Secret Life of Walter Mitty This James Thurber short story became a series of successful movies, and it's easy to see why. Regular-guy Walter Mitty escapes his humdrum existence the only way he can: by starring in daydreams that cast him as a fearless Army commander, a world-famous surgeon, a celebrated marksman, and other intrepid characters. Is Mitty's a life of quiet desperation, or is he just a kid at heart?